

EDITORIAL.

Certainly the most notable of the many good things in the February, 1899, *Osprey*, is the "Letter Box," which contains Dr. Gill's "Suggestions for a New History of North American Birds." While there may be many differences of opinion as regards the details suggested, the general plan of making it the greatest work in the world upon birds will meet the approval of every student of Ornithology. A great deal has been published about the most of our North American birds, but this matter has never been brought together in an available compilation. A great deal more is known about these birds than has ever been published, much of it, no doubt, put aside in old note-books and note-books not so old. Dr. Gill's suggestions contemplate as complete a compilation of all that is now known about all of our birds as possible, and where there is any manifest lack of completeness, to take active measures to supply that lack. Completeness, humanly speaking, is to be the watchword.

It is not proposed to prepare and issue this great work tomorrow, nor next week, nor next year, but to begin with the known, working out the unknown as rapidly as may be. It is this conception of the vastness of the enterprise, the recognition of how little we really know, and how much needs to be done to round out our knowledge, that appeals to us so strongly. The inauguration of so great a work would set in motion the forces which would begin the needed revision of our present arrangement and nomenclature, which would bring about an agreement as to the value of characters necessary to establish the groups from class to subspecies and thus effectually check the present marked tendency toward Quadrinomialism or, in other words, toward the undue and illogical elevation of minor characters.

The plan to begin the issue of this "History" as supplemental to the *Osprey*, either unpagged or else arbitrarily pagged, and not in consecutive order, certainly has its advantages, as Dr. Gill has pointed out. But there seem to us grave disadvantages as well. We heartily second the nomination of Dr. Coues as the Editor-in-chief, with a corps of able helpers who could relieve him of a large share of the less important work, and a younger associate who would be fully capable of bringing it to completion in the event of a longer continuance of the enterprise than anticipated, and the failing strength of the chief editor.

We hope that the work may be begun without further delay.

Judging from the effect of the extremely cold wave of the last week of January and the first week of February, 1895, when the Bluebirds were almost exterminated, it would be fair to suppose that the even colder weather of the first and second weeks of February just past, would have finished them. As indicated elsewhere in this issue, however, it will be seen that Bluebirds were very much in evidence in Lorain County, Ohio, on March 11. They have been fairly common in many places in the county during the greater part of March. It would seem that the survivors of 1895, being the fittest to survive, produced a race of hardier birds which found the recent extreme cold scarcely an inconvenience. Let us hope that they will survive unnumbered winters.

The signs of returning prosperity are more and more manifest in our chosen field of science as well as in the industrial world. The many different organizations for the study of birds, state and otherwise, are publishing their own records. Thus the Maine Ornithological Society contributes to the science thru its quarterly "Journal" of ten pages. The Cooper Ornithological Club likewise finds its sixteen-page illustrated bi-monthly "Bulletin" a far greater satisfaction than a few pages in some other publication. The publication of the Michigan and Iowa organizations continue to improve. "Bird Lore," under the editorship of Mr. Frank M. Chapman and management of the Macmillan Company, enters the field as the champion of bird protection, and has the promise of a wide circulation and a useful mission. The growing numbers of these publications exclusively devoted to Ornithology indicate a growing conception of the need of earnest, careful, discriminating study of the whole field. It is well so.

In *Forest and Stream* for February 25, 1899, we notice an article by our fellow member, Mr. Benj. T. Gault, in which the Crow figures as a nest robber of the Prairie Hen, and of many other birds. It seems hard to believe, sometimes, that the black side of the Crow character is not more prominent than the other side.

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED.

New Mallophaga, III. Comprising Mallophaga from birds of Panama, Baja California and Alaska, by Vernon L. Kellogg.